



RUTH

THE

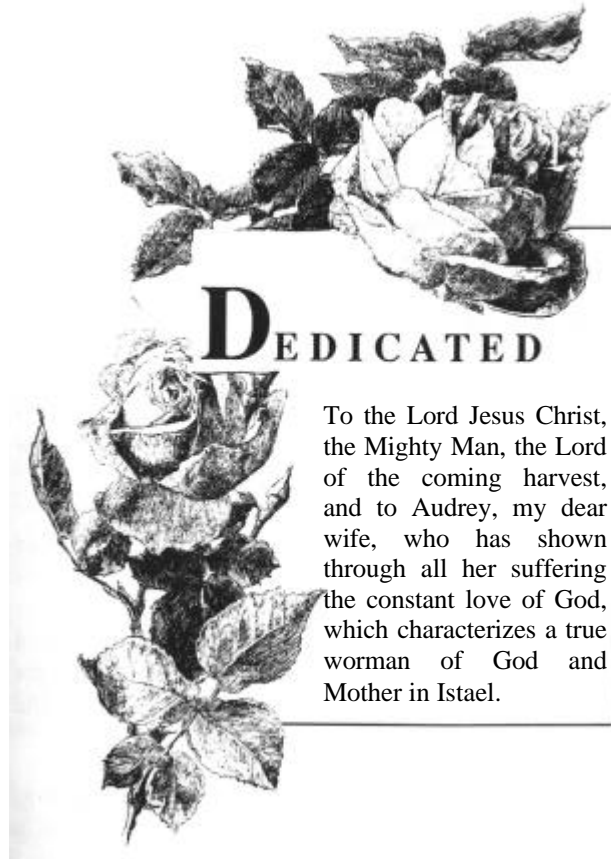
GENTILE

BRIDE OF CHRIST

STEPPING STONES TO GLORY

BY BRIAN J. BAILEY

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To the Lord Jesus Christ,
the Mighty Man, the Lord
of the coming harvest,
and to Audrey, my dear
wife, who has shown
through all her suffering
the constant love of God,
which characterizes a true
woman of God and
Mother in Israel.

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cover of Ruth gleaning in the field of Boaz, certainly sets the stage for one of the most beautiful love stories ever written.

About Paul Gustave Dore'—Dore' drew pictures because he could do nothing else. He never had a lesson in his life. He never drew from a model. He could not sketch from nature. He never retouched or considered his work after it was done. He lived fifty years and produced over 100,000 sketches, an average of six a day. He died in 1883, at the age of 50.

PROLOGUE

First and foremost, the book of Ruth exemplifies the second commandment; “*Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.*” This *law of love* is beautifully depicted in the loving relationship that existed between Ruth, the Moabitess, and her mother-in-law, Naomi. It is clear from scripture that the faithful and constant devotion of Ruth to Naomi was refined and deepened through the fires of profound tragedy and suffering. As a result of many breakings, we see their mutual love for each other purified, until one is only able to see the pure love of Jesus flowing forth from these two very courageous women.

Secondly, this book tells the story of a deep and abiding love which Ruth felt toward her late husband, Mahlon. The depth of this love is evident as we consider the scriptural fact that Ruth’s second marriage to Boaz was predicated, uniquely, upon the sole purpose of preserving a seed and an inheritance for Mahlon in Israel. Ruth's willingness to leave her own land and her own people in order to secure an inheritance for her dead husband is a testimony of her faithfulness to him, to God and to Israel.

Ruth - The Gentile Bride of Christ

Thirdly, we see in the person of Boaz, the pure love of Jesus Christ. In him we also see the Kinsman Redeemer, The Mighty Man, and the Lord of the harvest, who brings us into rest with God, our Heavenly Husband.

Fourthly, through the union of Ruth and Boaz, we see the union of the true Church of Jesus Christ. Ruth was a Gentile, Boaz was a Hebrew. And just as Jesus Christ redeemed His people, we see that Boaz redeemed Ruth and then became her husband. In like manner, Jesus is coming for a bride. Jesus died for all, Jew and Gentile alike, and His Church is made up of all who shall become his lovely Bride.

1

INTRODUCTION

The book of Ruth is a truly beautiful story of a young Moabitess girl. It is a story of one who passed through a valley of intense sorrow, suffering and humiliation. Yet in the end, she became the great-grandmother of King David. A Gentile by birth, Ruth shared in the line through which the Savior of the world appeared. Since He came to redeem both Jew and Gentile alike, it is certainly fitting that the blood of both should flow within His veins.

Ruth is a type of the Gentile (non-Jewish) Church, a Church that entered into the same promises and covenant relationship with God which Israel was privileged to enjoy with her heavenly bridegroom, Jehovah, the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is important for us to consider the historical background of Israel at this time. According to the Jewish rabbis, this book opens during the period when the Midianites and Amalekites had devastated the land of Israel. It was a time of intense suffering for God's people. Yet this suffering was inflicted upon them by God as just retribution because they had done evil in God's sight. *"And the hand of Midian prevailed against Israel: and because of the Midianites the children of Israel made them the dens which are in the mountains, and caves, and strong holds. And so it was, when Israel had sown, that the Midianites came up, and the Amalekites, and the children of the east, even they came up against them; And they encamped against them, and destroyed the increase of the earth, till thou come unto Gaza, and left no sustenance for Israel, neither sheep, nor ox, nor ass. For they came up with their cattle and their tents, and they came as grasshoppers for multitude; for both they and their camels were without number: and they entered into the land to destroy it. And Israel was greatly*

impoverished because of the Midianites; and the children of Israel cried unto the Lord' (Judges 6:2-6).

Because of the famine, many Israelites fled to the nearby land of Moab. Among those who found refuge in Moab were a man named Elimelech, his wife Naomi, and his two sons, Mahlon and Chilion. The book of Ruth concerns the life and times of this family, but more importantly it concerns Elimelech's daughter-in-law.

Ruth, a Gentile, returned to the land of Israel after the death of her husband Mahlon, and later became one of the heroines of Jewish history. Along with Tamar and Rahab, she is one of the three Gentiles in the lineage of Christ. Ruth is also one of the seven barren women in the Holy scriptures. Ruth, Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, Manoah's wife, Hannah and Elizabeth all brought forth sons late in life; yet all these men became men of consequence in the history of Israel.

2

STEPPING STONES TO GLORY

This beautiful little book of Ruth begins with the account of a famine that seriously affected Israel. Because of the invasion and occupation by the heathen armies of Midian and Amalek, Israel was experiencing severe economic upheaval. Most certainly, it was a difficult time. Thus, Elimelech, a husband and father, came to know the heartaches of economic deprivation much like that which is sweeping the world today. In order to provide for his family, Elimelech's solution was to move from his own land of terror and hardships into a foreign land where relative peace and prosperity prevailed. The Lord often uses conditions such as these to bring to pass His higher purposes for His *elect*. But

unfortunately, Elimelech was unable to see God's divine plan unfold; for he died in the land wherein he was a stranger.

The names given to Elimelech and Naomi's two sons help us to see the spiritual concern, and even despair, of the parents at this time in their lives. Mahlon means *weakling*, and certainly their spiritual and material situation had been considerably weakened. Chilion, the second born, means *pinning one*. And this name epitomized the yearning in his parents' hearts for their homeland and the former days of prosperity when they had known real spiritual fruitfulness in the house of their parents. The former prosperity is apparent when we consider the meanings of their names. Elimelech means *My God is King*, and Naomi means *pleasant one*. Yes, their early childhood had been one of supreme happiness and comfort, for they had been brought up in the time when Israel was enjoying comparative peace and rest.

It was in the days when Deborah the prophetess judged the nation; a time when the land had enjoyed rest for some forty years.

How important it is, when we are going through a valley of grief and sorrow, that we hold steady. How important it is to trust in God, for He specializes in weakness. He said to the Apostle Paul in Second

Corinthians 12:9, *“My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.”* Now we must look for a moment at Paul's response. *“Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.”* This is the true and triumphant attitude of an overcoming saint.

Well, there was a similar work of grace going on in this dear family. The Lord was doing a special work in their lives through the untimely death of Elimelech. In Isaiah 55:8,9 we read, *“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.”* Truly, His ways and His thoughts are higher than ours, and we must not question His wisdom. We must always allow Him to choose for us!

Therefore, in the wisdom of God, Elimelech had to go first. Next would come the marriages of his two sons, Mahlon and Chilion, in order to focus upon those whom He needed for his purposes— namely, Orpah and Ruth. Then Mahlon and Chilion died.

As Orpah and Ruth now enter the picture, we can be assured that Naomi naturally assumed that her life was going to be better. Yet when we are in the hands of the Lord, one trial always seems to lead

to a similar one; but one of a deeper hue. In fact, life has a pattern. So often, we can best understand our life's journey by looking back to the pit from whence we have been drawn.

By so doing, we are able to see what particular work God has to do within our souls and spirits to remove what is foreign to Him. During these times, we are also able to look with the eye of faith into our situations and see God's purposes, and that which He has destined for our lives.

To better appreciate the valley of despair through which this holy family was passing, we need to pause for a moment to consider some of the purposes of suffering.

The Blessings of Suffering

First, it is important to understand Job 5:6,7; "Although affliction cometh not forth of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground; Yet man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward."

Likewise, when considering the spiritual life, the Apostle Paul, in Acts 14:22, confirmed the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, said, "that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God." In Second Timothy 2:12, Paul also explains to us that only those who suffer with Christ shall reign with Him.

Although the sufferings of Christ abound in us, we must also become acquainted with His consolation. Second Corinthians 1:4, 5 reads, "Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abound- eth by Christ."

Sufferings and fiery trials purify every believer who submits to them. "Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin; That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God" (I Pet. 4:1, 2). It is through sufferings, that at the time seem insupportable, that the character and nature of the Lord are worked out by the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer. The following are virtues that only come through the intense fire of trials and suffering:

Meekness— is the quality so akin to true saintliness. Meekness is the fruit of the Spirit that can accept (with submissiveness of heart, mind and spirit) abasement, abuse, and affliction. A meek person has a lamb-like nature that shows no response to disappointments, mockings, jestings, and

cruelties. Meekness is a fruit of the Spirit that enables the one so used to exude a sweetness, and thereby triumph in all circumstances.

Patience—is the ability to encounter adversity and pressures and to overcome them. The purpose of pressures is best explained as we consider the art of making pottery. When the clay is first taken from the ground, it is mixed with sand, small stones, decayed vegetable matter, and other foreign substances. The clay that is put on the potter's wheel has to be subjected to pressure by the skilled hands of the master potter until all air bubbles or foreign substances are removed. This is accomplished today, as in ancient times, by mixing water with the clay and letting the mixture stand in a large basin. The impurities fall to the bottom, and the process is repeated until the upper clay is purified.

So, too, does the Lord deal with us! He bathes and washes us in the water of the Word, after which we are put, figuratively speaking, upon the potter's wheel (Ephesians 5:26). There, the Potter applies with His skillful hands, pressure after pressure upon us until all the remaining air bubbles and foreign matter may be revealed and removed. Should there be anything left in the composition after the

vessel is formed or reformed upon the wheel, when it goes into the fiery kiln, the vessel will be marred to one degree or another.

Thus, we can liken this same process to Christians who either resist the pressures or leave the wheel when the pressures seem too great. Unfortunately, this disqualifies them from further advancement in the kingdom. In order for the clay to be molded upon the wheel, the potter continually douses it with water. In like manner, the water of the Word preserves us when we experience those times of intense pressure. Also, abundant grace is offered to us in the time of our need. It is only by grace that we can survive and remain on the wheel of pressure. Those who take themselves off God's wheel do so because they fail to appropriate available grace.

Let us now turn to the particular area of suffering that this holy family was called upon to endure. This area was finances.

Dependence (Economic Deprivation)—Each and every one of us in our lifetime will, as we follow hard after God, be caused to experience economic deprivation in one form or another. Personally, we have had many such experiences, and they have been placed there by a loving God, so that we may come to know the Lord as our Jehovah Jireh—the Lord that sees and provides. My wife and I have

been caused to know homelessness, walking the streets, sleeping in railway stations, under trees, or in our car.

During these lean times, we could have said that this was not the will of God. On occasions when we had no food, we could have said that either God was not fair or that we were not in the will of God. Yet neither would have been true. We were being tested as to whether or not we were following God for His blessings, or for the Giver Himself. By the grace of God, both my wife and I determined that we would seek Him for the grace to remain faithful in those trials, which were at times years in duration.

The effect that it has had upon us, and I am sure upon all who have gone through similar experiences for His glory, is that money and material comforts mean so little. As a minister, one is entrusted with very large sums of money. When we have teflon-coated hands, that money can pass through our hands to reach those who will use it for the advancement of God's kingdom.

Thus, too, with Elimelech, the path of economic deprivation due to famine and ransacking by the Midianites, must have brought his family into very reduced circumstances. Circumstances, however, which brought forth the above mentioned noble aspects of character that were required by those who

were to take part in one of the most epic stories of all time. These virtues, above all else, bring forth a holy dependence upon God.

Bereavement

Certainly, this holy family understood what it was to lose loved ones. First the father, Elimelech, died. Then the two sons, Mahlon and Chilion, died. At first, bereavement produces a sense of bewilderment, then a void, followed by indescribable loneliness that is so hard to bare. This, coupled with sorrow at the realization that the loved one will not be seen again, is enough to break even the hardest heart.

Death makes everything seem very empty and meaningless. Thus, Naomi finds herself trapped in a world of bewilderment and pain, which she sums up very succinctly, “*Call me not Naomi, [pleasant one] call me Mara: [bitter] for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me. I went out full, and the Lord hath brought me home again empty*” (Ruth 1:20). Truly, at such times of deep trials there is a tendency to blame God for all these tribulations. There is also the tendency to question His love and wisdom.

Yet the Lord can take away all the sorrow and turn our mourning into dancing. Psalm 30:11-12 was put to music by a Christian brother in New Zealand. It was birthed within his heart the night he left the hospital deathbed of his beloved wife, and returned to a home filled with six small children.

“Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing: thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness; to the end that my [soul] shall sing praise to thee, and not be silent. O Lord my God, I will give thanks unto thee for ever” (Psalm 30:11-12).

That same night, the Holy Spirit fell upon him and he danced around the room singing these verses. Yes, God is the God of all consolation! Beloved, however deep your trial, remember Lamentations 3:32-33, *“But though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies. For he doth not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men.”*

My own beloved wife, who has been called upon to pass through much physical suffering, has been comforted by the Lord in times of surgery (and now paralysis) by the truth of two sections in the first epistle of Peter. *“Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through (manifold) temptations: that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that*

perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:5-7).

Peter's use of the word *manifold* is interesting! *Manifold* means multicolored or varied hues. Peter mentions manifold temptations but also manifold grace, meaning there is a special hue of grace to perfectly match every hue of temptation. "*As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God*" (1 Peter 4:10).

We are talking about grace that matches exactly the same color of the trial. For example, a yellow trial has yellow grace. And as my wife sometimes says when we are passing through a very black, terrible trial, "We need black grace."

But let us for a moment consider a shawl that was sent to us by a church in Guatemala at the beginning of one of our trials. Woven into the shawl in Spanish were the words of Romans 5:17, "*For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.*"

Yes, in order to reign in this life over all the trials, vicissitudes and tribulations of our earthly sojourn, we need an abundance of grace. But beloved, that abundant grace is only made available when there is an abundance of *need*. Trials can make us better or bitter. Attitude is the key! Romans 8:28 works at all times. The Lord whispered to my wife as she held her dying father in her arms, “Do you choose to believe?” It is only by an act of our will and by God's grace that we are able to honestly reply, “Yes Lord!”

At such times, the grace of God can move mightily in our lives, even to the *removing* of sorrow. Again, a short time later when my wife was grieving for her father, the Lord gently rebuked her by saying, “I took the grief from you, now do not try to take it back.” (Isaiah 53:4). God can put such peace within our hearts that we can say from the depths of our beings, “Amen to Thee, dear Lord.”

In order to clarify my point even further, I would like to briefly relate another experience. On the morning that we arrived to comfort my wife's aunt after the death of her husband, the Lord gave me a vision of a book—the book of her life. I saw the book, and it was now open to a *new* chapter. The lesson here is this; the Lord, even in extreme times of testing, wants us to turn our face to the wind

and be prepared to go on into new experiences with Him. We are not to dwell upon, or try to live in the past.

Thus it was for Ruth. Her book was now opened to a new chapter, a new life's destiny. At such times there is a fresh testing. Thus, Orpah and Ruth were subjected to much discouragement through the entreatings of Naomi when she pointedly told them to return to their own people.

Orpah, after declaring her intentions to stay with her mother-in-law, whom she deeply loved and respected, succumbed to the temptations of realism. Naomi could, of herself, give no hope of another husband, so with reluctance, sorrow, and much weeping, Orpah turned back to her own people for her future. We have no scriptural or historical account available to us concerning her later life; but we have reason to believe from experience, that the Lord blessed her mightily upon the plane that she chose to remain, even as He did Esau. She no doubt would have felt justified in her decision, for her vision was fulfilled to her satisfaction.

Ruth, however, had a higher purpose. This purpose meant she must remain united, not only to Naomi, but to Naomi's people and to her God, the glorious God of Israel, under whose wings she

now, with greater fervency of purpose, put her trust. Ruth literally clave to Naomi and entreated her not to cause her to leave the only one who now mattered to her.

What a step of consecration is seen in those wonderful verses of Ruth 1:16-18, as Ruth declares with determination that she will never leave Naomi. *“May the Lord deal with me, be it ever so severely, if anything but death separates you and me.”* (NIV). Ruth's declaration of love and loyalty to Naomi shows us one of the purest, most unselfish pictures of love ever written. Surely the verse, *“Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it”* (Song 8:7), is a living testimony of the strength of Ruth's love and devotion toward her mother-in-law. The affection of a young widow for her widowed mother-in-law stands today as a strong contradiction to our modern viewpoint of love. In a time of such utter darkness worldwide, a time when there is an ever growing number of strained relationships, broken homes and loveless relationships, it is reassuring to reflect upon Ruth's loyalty and love. So let us now, by the grace of God, seek to undertake an in-depth study of this remarkable act of consecration.

“Whither thou goest, I will go”

The willingness to go wherever God sends us requires deep consecration. It means stepping out into the unknown, even as Abraham of old went out, not knowing where he was going. (Hebrews 11:8)

I remember when we were in the Cameroons, our missionary friend told us how difficult it was to move his pastors from one area to another because of the differences in food, even in the same country. These differences were so important to them that it caused them to desire only their own villages, which made the task of this missionary much more complicated.

However, Ruth was willing, with resolute faith, to place herself steadfastly into the hands of God to lead, guide, and bring her into circumstances and living conditions that were as yet, unfamiliar and foreign to her. Ruth's firm decision to follow Naomi and her God, coupled with her willingness to completely identify herself with God's people, brought a rich, eternal reward. Also, Ruth's surrender to the will and purposes of God ushered her beautiful and matchless portrait to the forefront of the “immortals” in recorded history.

“Where thou lodgest, I will lodge”

Many people are unable to travel because they are unwilling to sleep in beds or houses unlike their own. In the Cameroons, comforts had to be forgotten as we traveled by heavily laden barques across the treacherous seas to the islands. Once there, we were received into grass huts with leaky roofs and lizards jumping up and down on our mosquito nets. At times, my wife and I even had to live in the cow dung huts of the Masai tribes of East Africa.

True consecration must be measured by our willingness to forsake all such comforts. Ruth's consecration took the form of quiet, humble service that remained devoid of pride and arrogance. Oh, may we learn much through her example.

“Thy people shall be my people”

What a price Ruth paid! How difficult it must have been for her to forget her own people, and her father's house. Yet, this is the prerequisite of all missionaries. Psalm 45:10-11 tells us God's heart on the matter. *“Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people,*

and thy father's house; so shall the king greatly desire thy beauty: for he is thy Lord; and worship thou him."

Hebrews 11:15 warns of the snare into which many fall while on the foreign field. *"And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned."* To be truly effective for the Lord, we must be identified with those of the land of our adoption. How very clear it is that Ruth was one that filled this qualification. For her new found faith compelled her to live with the people, "whose God was the Lord", and she was willing to accept whatever lodgings God would choose for her.

"Thy God shall be my God"

We must thoroughly fulfill the first commandment in Exodus 20:3, *"Thou shalt have no other gods before me."* Not only was this the consecration that a heathen girl, Ruth, had to make, but it is for all of us. We must forsake our idols, whether they are those of another religion, or whether they are those tucked away deep down in our hearts. Idols of self, family members, ambitions or possessions can hinder our total consecration to a most holy God.

Ruth relinquished all her native gods and idols for the one true, living God, the Lord God of Israel. Naomi's God would, henceforth, be her only God, the One she would serve with all her heart.

Had Ruth gone back with Orpah to Moab, it is quite possible that she would have returned to the altars of Baal. But now, with God in her heart, she longed to be with those of like precious faith.

“Where thou diest, will I die”

Rupert Brooke in his poem, “The Soldier,” says, “There will be some place in a foreign field that will be forever England.” Prophetically, he was speaking of his death in battle upon a foreign field. We must also be willing to make this consecration. We must be willing to die and to be buried in the land of our inheritance even as Ruth, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph were willing to do. Oh, to be as Ruth, steadfastly minded with respect to each of these five points of consecration!

Ruth was willing to be so identified with the Israelites and her adopted land, that there would not be a thought of returning to her own homeland. When we consider the fact that Ruth, as a Moabitess, was not a welcomed stranger in the land of Israel, it makes us even more aware of her degree of



consecration. Ruth's total consecration so beautifully illustrates the hymn writer's cry of ecstasy in contemplating the consecration of Jesus upon the cross when he says, "Such demands my life, my all."

NAOMI AND HER DAUGHTERS-IN- LAW

3

NAOMI'S RETURN

It is obvious from scripture that Naomi was a lady of renown; for when she returned to Bethlehem, the whole city was moved because of her coming and they said, “*Is this Naomi?*” Her plaintive cry was very revealing, “*Call me not Naomi [meaning pleasant] call me Mara [meaning bitter], for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me*” (Ruth 1:19-20).

How often in our lifetime must we pass through bitter experiences! Yet how important it is to know *the* key to being victorious. What is the key to keeping the sweetness of Jesus in our hearts and thoughts

during such difficulties? Let us examine one who triumphed gloriously in the face of bitterness. His name was Joseph.

Joseph was betrayed by his brethren, sold into slavery, and then falsely accused and put into prison for many years. All this happened when he was very young. When he met those same brethren twenty-two years later and their roles were reversed, Joseph then had the power over them. Genesis 50:18-21 gives us a clear picture of his humility. *“And his brethren also went and fell down before his face; and they said, Behold, we be thy servants. And Joseph said unto them, Fear not: for am I in the place of God? But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive. Now therefore fear ye not: I will nourish you, and your little ones. And he comforted them, and spake kindly unto them.”*

What was his secret? Joseph was able to see God in all his situations. And he was able to recognize the hand of God, even in injustices. During his captivity in prison when they hurt his feet with fetters and he was laid in iron, the Word of the Lord was trying [or testing] him. Yet, he endured because he was looking to Him who is invisible. He drew upon the grace of God. Our *attitudes* are so important. They determine virtually everything in life.

Philippians 2:13-15 tells us, “*For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure. Do all things without murmurings and disputings: that ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world.*” There was no murmuring by Joseph. Let us pray for grace to be of the same disposition in trials, both great and small.

Naomi could well say that she went out full, but the Lord had brought her back empty. Yet, God's thoughts so exceed our thoughts. “*As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are His ways higher than our ways.*” God’s plan, hidden from Naomi, was moving inexorably toward its conclusion. All the trials, sorrows and afflictions were necessary to bring Naomi and Ruth into that place of blessing which would far exceed their greatest expectations. Beloved, hold steady in your valley of sorrow, for the Lord is working to do you good in your latter end.

4

THE BARLEY HARVEST

They returned, we are told, at the time of the barley harvest, the time of the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. It was the beginning of months in the Jewish calendar, and certainly it was a time of new beginnings for both Naomi and Ruth in God's plan and purposes for their lives. It was springtime, and certainly no scripture could better illustrate the change in their lives more than the Song of Solomon 2:10-12. *"My beloved spake, and said unto me, Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away. For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; The flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land."*

A new found sense of joy would soon come into their lives. It was going to come in the person of a kinsman, a mighty man of wealth, of the family of Elimelech. His name was Boaz.

How unsearchable are God's judgments, and His ways are truly past finding out. The *path* that led Ruth and Naomi to Boaz, the deliverer of these two widows, was not a direct encounter, but a time of further proving. It was a time of deeper humiliation and abasement for both of them, and these two were going to be further tried until seemingly no earthly hope was left.

They were both destitute; but rather than depending upon the charity of relatives, Ruth took the initiative. They were desperately in need of food, but fortunately for them it was harvest time in Israel, a time when the golden sheaves were ready to be gathered in. Ruth was well aware that her aged mother-in-law was too old to work. Thus, in humble submission to Naomi, she asks permission to go to the field and glean ears of corn after him in whose sight she would find grace. This, incidentally, was the provision of the law for the poor.

“And when ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not wholly reap the corners of thy field, neither shalt thou gather the gleanings of thy harvest. And thou shalt not glean thy vineyard, neither

shalt thou gather every grape of thy vineyard; thou shalt leave them for the poor and stranger; I am the Lord your God' (Leviticus 19:9, 10).

After Ruth receives permission from Naomi, who certainly must have been humbled by the fact that her daughter-in-law had to provide for her, she went into the field and gleaned after the reapers. As she took her place with the gleaners, there was no sign that she was in any way ashamed of the low order of her work. There was no complaint. Ruth and Naomi had to live, and this was their provision. But as providence would have it, Ruth gleaned a part of the field that belonged to *Boaz*. Oh, if we think it is by happenstance that our “manifold trials” occur, we fail to see by the eye of faith the providential guidance of Almighty God! Ruth had put her trust in Him, and all who do so shall never be put to shame. His eye is on the sparrow, and surely His eye was upon Naomi and Ruth. He was at work to bring to pass His purposes.

There was hope in Ruth's heart that bright, beautiful, harvest morning as she followed the reapers. And it was with joy, confidence and total abandonment to God's will, that she took her place with the poor and needy that day. Ruth now had put her entire life into the hands of God, under whose wings she had come to trust, and He would surely undertake for her!

Ruth - The Gentile Bride of Christ

These Godly qualities, written upon the fleshly tables of Ruth's heart, are just some of the qualities that Jesus Christ, our Heavenly Husband, is looking for in His bride. Remember, He is coming for a bride that is without spot or wrinkle. Thus, we do well to covet these necessary virtues, as we cry out to God to develop them within us.

5

THE CHARACTER OF BOAZ

At this juncture in our story, we are given an insight into the character of Boaz, who is chosen by God to be the husband of Ruth, and to be equally in the lineage of both David and Christ. Apart from being informed that he was a mighty man of wealth, we are now shown the Godly and gracious side of his character. (Ruth 2:5-16) His greeting to the reapers reveals at once his humility, and their response to him shows how highly they respected him.

Boaz recognized the humbleness of his servants. We also see that he was a God-fearing man. Furthermore, in recognizing that Ruth was not one of the regular maidens, we see that he must have

known all the women who worked for him. This is a rare quality in such a great man. He had, we might say, a pastor's care and concern for all those who were in his employ.

The name of Boaz does not mean *strength* as in the pillars of Solomon in First Kings 7:21, but rather it comes from a Hebrew word, better translated as *alacrity*. This could be rendered as "cheerful, willing to serve; quick of thought or action." Boaz was certainly well named. He had that sensitivity toward the needs of others, which is the hallmark of good leadership. Clearly, he moved quickly to address those needs. This is emphasized in his attitude toward Ruth. He is first aware that she is not one of his maidens, then he diligently inquires of his servant who she is.

In turn, the head servant informs him and adds this commendation— that she is diligent, conscientious and honorable. These virtues are easily seen when we read from scripture that Ruth introduced herself to the overseer as the Moabite maiden. Knowing that Israel had no natural love for the Moabites, Ruth refused to hide her nationality. She worked hard from morning light, resting but a little in the lean-to provided for the workers. These attributes would certainly be appreciated by any property owner like Boaz, who was interested in quickly gathering in the grain.

The Israelite woman worked hard and long, but she was fortunate when that toil was for her husband and children. A childless widow in Ruth's position depended on the charitable provisions of Mosaic law. According to that law, she was allowed to gather grain from a stranger's field. Thus, Ruth was brought by God to the field of Boaz, her kinsman redeemer.

Harvesting was difficult work and demanded many long hours of backbreaking labor in the hot sun. Young men moved through the fields grasping handfuls of the grain and cutting through the stalks with sickles. These small bunches of grain were then bound into bundles called sheaves. The men worked rapidly, and often, a number of stalks fell to the ground. These, too, could be picked up if they were careful and took the time. However, any stalks that dropped were allowed to remain where they fell. Poor people, who followed behind the reapers, were allowed to glean or gather the random stalks. In many cases, this was all that stood between them and starvation.

As a sensitive, understanding man, Boaz then addressed the needs of Ruth, giving her security in a place to labor. He told her to stay close by his maidens. His way of addressing her is interesting (Ruth 2:8, 9). It is that of an elder to a younger subordinate, who merits favor and compassion.

Also, he had already given a charge to the young men that they were not to touch her; for women in a like predicament to hers would be at the mercy of any young man's fancy. Unfortunately, this would be especially true because she was a Moabitess, and therefore hated by many.

Furthermore, he generously opens up to her his provisions, so that Ruth is cared for in every way. At mealtime, he permits her to eat with the reapers, and then gives a further command to permit her to glean more. This generous man then tells them to let some handfuls of grain fall on purpose, thus helping her in every way.

I understand very well this largeness of heart! At one point in our lives we were destitute, and I went to pick apples at harvest time in western Washington. Unaccustomed to such labor, I found the work very hard and exacting, and I was unable to fill the container by day's end to receive my pay. There was, however, a Boaz-like owner of the orchards, who seeing my predicament and dilemma, most graciously commanded his pickers to fill up my containers and then paid me the full amount. May the Lord remember his goodness and give him a full reward.

BOAZ AND RUTH



6

RUTH'S GRACIOUS NATURE

Her attitude toward the grace of Boaz was one of abject humility. She fell upon her face and bowed herself to the ground. It is best characterized in the words of Jesus who said, "*Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven.*" It was the hallmark of a true beggar, who is very grateful for every crumb that falls from the rich man's table.

Ruth's humble nature was further revealed in her amazement that somehow she had found grace in the eyes of Boaz. It was a surprise to her that he would take knowledge of her. For after all, she was a foreigner who was despised in Israel.

The reply of Boaz is best understood in these words of Jesus. "*Likewise also the good works of some are manifest beforehand; and they that are otherwise cannot be hid*" (1 Timothy 5:25).

"It hath fully been shewed me, all that thou hast done unto thy mother-in-law since the death of thine husband" (Ruth 2:11). That which we do for others, even family members, is not forgotten. Nor will it go unrewarded at the judgment throne. How often has one attended funerals where the minister's first words of commendation concerning a just man are that he had been a good husband and a good father to his children. Our actions toward those who are our daily companions, and how we handle responsibilities, rank first on the list of life's virtues.

So with Ruth, her care of Naomi was of utmost importance to this good and just man, Boaz.

Ruth's consecration toward the Lord, in that she had left her own father and mother and the land of her birth, to come unto a people that she knew not, so that she might put her trust in the Lord God of Israel, is commendable. Her labor of love toward Naomi and her trust in the Lord, could best be explained by the words of First John 3:17; "*But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?*"

So many parents and especially husbands fail in this area. Much to their future sorrow, they preoccupy themselves with preaching or witnessing to others, while neglecting their own families

Ruth concludes by entreating Boaz, hoping she might find favor in his sight, even though she adds, “I am not like one of thy handmaids.” We find in these words a cry from the heart of the stranger, a sense of loneliness and of not belonging. “*And if a stranger sojourn with thee in your land, ye shall not vex him. But the stranger that dwelleth with you shall be unto you as one born among you, and thou shalt love him as thyself; for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God.*” (Read Leviticus 19:33, 34).

But God knows the heart of a stranger. The fact, as we have already mentioned in previous chapters, that Ruth introduced herself to the overseer as a Moabite damsel shows forth more than ever the sense of not belonging. No matter how often my wife and I have lived in foreign countries, there has always been the feeling of being an outsider, even though we have been warmly received. Ruth felt this so very much, for truly she had burned all her bridges behind her.

7

HANDFULS OF PURPOSE

Let us return to the generous nature of Boaz for a moment in his dealings with Ruth. Later we shall see that Boaz, as the kinsman redeemer, is a type of the Lord Himself. Therefore, in so many of these recorded acts of mercy on the part of Boaz, we see the Lord's character and His ways with His people.

Handfuls of purpose are so characteristic of the Lord in encouraging us when we are on the right path. When we are doing His will and the going has been so hard, only then will He, in His own gracious way, encourage us by lifting the load. Often, He will give us an unexpected blessing that will

help us on our way. How wonderful it is to be used by the Lord as one of His hands out- stretched to bless another brother or sister in such a manner.

“The Lord helps those who help themselves” is a truism that we often hear the world quote. Ruth fits that picture very well, for her industrious nature opened the way for the Lord to bless her through Boaz. She brought forth that day an ephah of barley, which is the equivalent of 4.8 gallons of barley. This is a phenomenal amount when we consider that she was a woman, and that she had to glean, and not reap the grain, and pick up what others had dropped.

The beauty of Ruth is seen more clearly as we read how she took a little for her own hunger, and then gave the rest to Naomi. Such was the generous and openhanded nature of Ruth. Thus, it comes as no surprise to learn later on that she and Boaz are married. Why? Because it is a fact that likes go to likes—the liberal minded go to the generous-hearted.

Although only the deeds of one day are recorded, Ruth labored diligently until the end of the barley and wheat harvest, a period of several months. This, then, is not a picture of one who has a short-lived spurt of energy which is only manifested for one day. For Ruth, this was a way of life.

8

HOPE STARTS TO RISE

In the glimmering light of morning's early dawn, we see the hope of a new day arising. So true it is in the realm of the Spirit, that glimmers of light are given to us to spark hope deep within our being. They are there to tell us that a new spiritual day is dawning; and the darkness we are forced to endure, perhaps for years, is going to give way to the rays of the Son of Righteousness shining upon the pathway of our life once again. Such was the case for Naomi, as she learned that Ruth had gleaned in the field of Boaz, and he had shown unto her much kindness. For Naomi knew that Boaz

was a relative. Therefore Naomi said, “*The man is near of kin unto us, one of our next kinsmen*” (Ruth 2:20).

Part of the duty which came upon Naomi, with respect to Ruth, was that she must find a husband for her. This she expresses by saying in Ruth 3:1, “*My daughter, shall I not seek rest for thee, that it may be well with thee?*” At this point, it would do well for us to consider the scriptural significance of *rest*.

THE REST OF GOD

In the Word of God there are a number of aspects to this spiritual truth concerning the rest of God. Rest has several aspects. They are as follows:

1. The seventh day is when God rested from all His works.
2. The cessation from our own works, so that God may do His works through us. “*For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his*” (Hebrews 4:10).
3. The land of Israel itself was known as the rest of God for the Israelites. The *destination* of their journey was Canaan land. Being in the wilderness was being out of rest.

4. At times, God promised pious kings and judges that He would give them rest from all their enemies.

5. *Marriage* for a woman, since her husband would be her covering, protector, and provider, was considered rest.

In Jewish history, securing a marriage partner for a girl was the duty of the next of kin. Normally it was the parents, and principally the father, who was responsible. But in Ruth's case, it was Naomi's responsibility. However for Ruth, a widow, there were certain laws that now, as an Israelite, would be her guide.

"Then Naomi her mother-in-law said unto her, My daughter, shall I not seek rest for thee, that it may be well with thee?" (Ruth 3:1). Again we have this thought that Naomi had an obligation. She is the mother, and in the Mid-Orient that is the custom. The father is responsible for the son, and the mother is responsible for the daughter when making the marriage agreement. Marriage is looked upon as rest. The thought is that a husband is the provider and takes care of his wife; so there is a sense of security for the wife, a sense of rest.

I want you to see something in the book of Ruth that is like many marriages in the Word of God. These marriages have been God-ordained; yet there have been tremendous trials for the girls to see whether or not they would qualify to marry sons of God who have significant roles to play in His kingdom. Thus, we see the care with which Abraham instructed his servant Eliezer in the choosing of a bride for his son, Isaac, and the reverential fear with which Eliezar fulfilled his mission (Genesis 24:2). This little book is about qualifying, and we have herein two women who were given an opportunity for rest. Unfortunately, Orpah opted for another marriage in her own land; for her dedication to God was *not* such that His will was the first thing in her life—her marriage was. You have to be very careful in this. Marriage is wonderful, but it is worth paying the price to get the right one. Always in marriage, there is the sense of rest; and when a woman is married, she comes into that rest.

“And now is not Boaz of our kindred, with whose maidens thou wast? Behold, he winnoweth barley tonight in the threshing floor” (Ruth 3:2). Now Naomi gives Ruth instructions that seem to be very undesirable. Yet, we must understand that the customs here are different, and this practice was wholly accepted as right and proper behavior. Actually, it was quite a Godly thing that she was doing,

and she was doing it under the direction of her mother. *“Wash thyself therefore, and anoint thee, and put thy raiment upon thee, and get thee down to the floor: but make not thyself known unto the man, until he shall have done eating and drinking. And it shall be, when he lieth down, that thou shalt mark the place where he shall lie, and thou shalt go in, and uncover his feet, and lay thee down; and he will tell thee what thou shalt do”* (3:3, 4).

It was not her thought, for she had been consecrated. Ruth had already given up all her own desires and ambitions to follow Naomi. Ruth's own gods, her own people, and her own customs were now a thing of the past. Even this strange new custom would not stop Ruth's obedient heart from doing the will of her mother-in-law. Nor would the possibility of humiliation or defeat be enough to cause her to turn away from her good counsel.

Oh, to be like Ruth, who looked with eyes of faith beyond her circumstances unto the *prize*. How well Ruth understood that the prize is always worth the *price*, for the prize is to win Christ and to become His lovely bride.

In a sense, it was Naomi telling Ruth prophetically what to do in this given situation. Ruth was not moving on her own; it was Naomi who was her covering, giving her explicit instructions. The thought of uncovering his feet was the thought of putting herself completely at the mercy of Boaz, because Boaz had tremendous power. If he wanted to, he could have ordered her execution. In this sense, we have a picture that is reminiscent of another beautiful heroine of Jewish history. Esther, who also found herself in a moment of decision, said with total abandonment to her fate, "If I perish, I perish." Ruth's response is equally as resolute. *"All that thou sayest unto me I will do"* (Ruth 3:5).

Thus, the plan began to take shape. When harvests were good, the time of threshing and winnowing was an occasion for celebration. The grain had been safely gathered, and there would be plenty to eat that year. As the farmers and their workers waited their turns to use the communal threshing floor, they joined in laughing, singing and feasting. And because the labor took several days, they usually planned on remaining all night.

Since Boaz would take part in these festivities, Naomi felt it would be an ideal atmosphere in which to remind him of his family duty. So that night, when all was quiet, Ruth would cautiously approach the spot where Boaz slept. She would carefully lift his blanket, uncover his feet, and lie down. By lying at

his feet, she was appealing to him to become her *kinsman redeemer* and provide the protection due her as the widow of his kinsman.

Thus, did Ruth follow through with her mother-in-law's plan.

“And she went down unto the floor, and did according to all that her mother-in-law bade her. And when Boaz had eaten and drunk, and his heart was merry, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of corn: and she came softly, and uncovered his feet, and laid her down. And it came to pass at midnight, that the man was afraid, and turned himself: and, behold, a woman lay at his feet” (3:6-8).

He also was now in jeopardy because being a very Godly man, and being responsible for many people, his reputation must not be tarnished in this matter. So immediately he was in a turmoil.

“And he said, Who art thou? And she answered, I am Ruth thine handmaid: spread therefore thy skirt over thine handmaid; for thou art a near kinsman” (3:1). In effect she was saying, “I am doing this because I want you to perform the right of a kinsman.” We must consider what she was doing. Also, we must consider what she was asking, and find out if there are any other circumstances in the Word of God that confirm her course of action.

What is a kinsman? The prime root of that word in Hebrew means “redeemer.” Basically, in this sense, it means the next of kin had the obligation to marry the widow of a member of the family who had no children. That was the law; and their obligation was clearly stated in the law. *“If brethren dwell together, and one of them die, and have no child, the wife of the dead shall not marry without unto a stranger: her husband’s brother shall go in unto her, and take her to him to wife, and perform the duty of an husband’s brother unto her. And it shall be, that the firstborn which she beareth shall succeed in the name of his brother which is dead, that his name be not put out of Israel”* (Deuteronomy 25:5, 6).

The whole purpose was that if a man died childless, and his widow was of marriageable age, then the next of kin was obliged to take the widow for a wife. The children, and a son in particular, would not be his, but rather it was the son of the one who had died.

This was to ensure that the name of the dead husband would not be obliterated. It was God’s law in Israel, so the one who was born out of that marriage would inherit all the lands of his mother’s first husband. The purpose was to ensure that the one who had died would still keep the inheritance.

Of course, he did have a say in the matter because of Deuteronomy 25:7-10. *“And if the man like not to take his brother’s wife, then let his brother’s wife go up to the gate unto the elders, and say, My*

husband's brother refuseth to raise up unto his brother a name in Israel, he will not perform the duty of my husband's brother. Then the elders of his city shall call him, and speak unto him: and if he stand to it, and say, I like not to take her, Then shall his brother's wife come unto him in the presence of the elders, and loose his shoe from off his foot, and spit in his face, and shall answer and say, So shall it be done unto that man that will not build up his brother's house. And his name shall be called in Israel, The house of him that hath his shoe loosed." Thus, we can see from the Word of God that it was an obligation.

Now we can better understand something of the dedication of Ruth, and the tremendous love she had for her husband. She was willing to forego everything, including her pride, in order that her husband's inheritance be secure. She was willing to prostrate herself at the feet of Boaz, knowing that Boaz could do anything to her. In her position, he could have very easily accused her of immorality, and she would not have been able to defend herself.

"Spread therefore thy skirt over thine handmaiden." In other words, put your clothing over me or cover me. Now we must examine this principle in the word of God. In Ezekiel 16:3, He is speaking to Jerusalem, and is likening her unto a woman. He is speaking of the father and mother in verse three

and of the nativity or birth, and He is speaking of the fact that no eye pitied Jerusalem. In verse six He says; *“And when I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, ‘Live’ yea, I said unto thee when thou wast in the blood, ‘Live,’ I have caused thee to multiply as the bud of the field, and thou hast increased and waxen great, and thou art come to excellent ornaments... Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was the time of love; and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness: yea, I swear unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord God, and thou becamest mine”* (Ezekiel 16:6-8).

Therefore God is saying to Jerusalem, “You were rejected and I came and I chose you, and then I married you.” (Jerusalem is the name of the heavenly city.) God Himself uses the expression “spread my skirt over thee” because it was the custom to cover. The wife was covered by the garment of the husband. This is what Ruth was saying, “Acknowledge that you are the kinsman. I prostrate myself before you to do according to the law of God that I must not marry outside, but I must marry into the family to preserve the name and inheritance of my husband.” It was a tremendous thing that she did!

In 3:10, Boaz acknowledges it. *“And he said, ‘Blessed be thou of the Lord, my daughter: for thou hast shewed more kindness in the latter end than at the beginning, inasmuch as thou followedst not young*

men, whether poor or rich.” Ruth treated her husband with kindness and love, but when he was dead she showed that she had not cast off her first faith or love as Paul tells us in First Timothy 5:11-13. “But the younger widows refuse: for when they have begun to wax wanton against Christ, they will marry. Having [condemnation], because they have cast off their first faith. And withal they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not.”

9

THE KINSMAN REDEEMER

With these words, “Shall I not seek rest for thee,” a whole litany of events were now going to unfold. To understand the actions of Naomi, and by consequence, Ruth, we need to examine once again the truths with respect to the kinsman redeemer as enunciated in the law of God.

Deuteronomy 25:5-10 tells us, *“If brethren dwell together, and one of them die, and have no child, the wife of the dead shall not marry without unto a stranger: her husband’s brother shall go in unto her, and take her to him to wife, and perform the duty of an husband’s brother unto her. And it shall be, that the firstborn which she beareth shall succeed in the name of his brother which is dead, that*

his name be not put out of Israel. And if the man like not to take his brother's wife, then let his brother's wife go up to the gate unto the elders, and say, My husband's brother refuseth to raise up unto his brother a name in Israel, he will not perform the duty of my husband's brother. Then the elders of his city shall call him, and speak unto him: and if he stand to it, and say, I like not to take her; Then shall his brother's wife come unto him in the presence of the elders, and loose his shoe from off his foot, and spit in his face, and shall answer and say, So shall it be done unto that man that will not build up his brother's house. And his name shall be called in Israel, The house of him that hath his shoe loosed."

In effect, Naomi was seeking marriage for Ruth with Boaz because he had shown such kindness toward the widows, and was thoroughly conversant with the state of their affairs. Her instructions to Ruth might appear to us to be bold and unbecoming for any woman to follow; yet, she was following the law. She was making Boaz aware of his responsibilities as the near kinsman to take Ruth as his lawfully wedded wife. Ruth was acting in absolute obedience, and in complete submission to her mother-in-law. It was an act of pure compliance to Naomi's directives. The purpose in Naomi

requiring Ruth to lay down at Boaz's feet was to put Ruth in a position of servitude and humility with respect to this great man. In this humble position, she would wait for his decision.

When Boaz awoke at midnight and asked who she was, her reply caused only praise to break forth from his lips for her actions. His commendations were based upon the following fact: that she had shown more kindness now than at the beginning, in that she had dedicated herself to keeping the divine law of God by her willingness to marry Boaz, an older man, instead of seeking for herself a younger man.

This requires much understanding of the law, for the kindness Boaz attributes to Ruth is with respect to her late husband. By all accounts we can see that she had been a most loving and compassionate wife. But because her husband had died childless, he had no inheritance in Israel, and his name would therefore be cut off. Boaz is very aware of Ruth's reason for coming to him in such a manner, and it pleased him.

Boaz heaped praise upon Ruth because she was not considering herself in this matter of the second marriage, but only the inheritance of her late husband. Few acts of devotion can be so great as those

of Ruth the Moabitess. Hopefully, we now are able to appreciate more than ever her dedication and consecration to the Lord Who guided virtually her every thought.

For this, Boaz said, *“For all the city of my people doth know that thou art a virtuous woman.”* What a tremendous testimony for this new convert of the Lord. The virtuous woman of Proverbs 31 is but a pale reflection of Ruth’s peerless character. What was her *reward* for this exemplary courage and devotion? Her obedience to the directions of Naomi were rewarded by Boaz with:

1. A promise to make contact with the one who was an even nearer kinsman than he.
2. Six measures of barley for Naomi, signifying the reward for the loyal and Godly counsel that she had given. We may not at times be the main participant in God’s plans, but in giving true counsel and advice to those who are, we shall, none the less, be noticed and compensated by the Lord.

Upon learning all that had transpired that night from the lips of Ruth, Naomi, with assurance, said, *“Sit still, my daughter, until thou know how the matter will fall”* (3:18). There is a time for action, and there is a time to quietly sit and wait for the Lord to work. The mature saints, such as Naomi, this precious

mother in Israel, know when to act and when to wait in confidence, putting their affairs completely and unreservedly into the hands of the Almighty.

Thus Naomi and Ruth rested, and the Lord worked. Naomi then reassured Ruth that Boaz would not rest until he had finished this thing that very day.

It may seem that the Lord takes forever and a day to move. But remember, He is preparing all things so that when the stage for the finale is set, and He moves quickly, then shall the scripture be fulfilled, *“Zion shall be born in a day.”*

10

THE LOST INHERITANCE

As previously stated, there was a kinsman *nearer* than Boaz that, by law, should perform the duty of kinsman redeemer. This man is now diligently sought out by Boaz in the public gate of the city where all affairs of government and property were transacted before the elders. (Read Ruth 4:1).

Because of the gravity and importance of this matter, Boaz takes ten men of the elders, ten being the spiritual number of the law, for this transaction pertained to the laws of Israel recorded in the book of Deuteronomy.

The nearest kinsman is advised of Naomi's desire to sell a parcel of land which before belonged to her husband, Elimelech. The kinsman is asked to redeem it, and he assents. Then, however, Boaz informs him that, at what time the land is purchased, he also must marry Ruth the Moabite, the wife of the dead, so that he might raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance.

It is at this point that the kinsman declines for fear of marring his own inheritance. This unwillingness not only cost him his place in history, but his place in the lineage of Christ, the Messiah. As we carefully look through the pages of holy scripture, we are truly amazed at the number of both men and women who were given opportunities for eternal glory, but who lost it because of their refusal to pay the price. (2 John 1:8).

We list some of these who lost their reward as a solemn warning to ourselves, lest a promise being left us, some of us should come short of it.

Cain lost the birthright because he refused to humble himself and follow the Lord's admonition to do well. Abel became the righteous one in his place, and of course, the first martyr. Ham became cursed and a servant for slandering his father, Noah. He lost out on the ultimate blessing to Japheth, the younger brother who was enlarged and entered into the blessing of the elder brother, Shem. Esau

was the elder brother who sold his birthright for a mess of pottage, and thus lost his inheritance to his younger brother, Jacob. Reuben lost his birthright to Joseph because of incest. Saul, through disobedience, lost his throne to David.

In New Testament times, Judas lost one of the greatest prizes of all, as one of the twelve apostles of the Lamb because of his betrayal of Christ to Matthias. Barnabas lost his position to Silas because of his dispute with Paul over John Mark. Among the women, we could site Vashti, who lost the crown royal to Esther, because of her disobedience to her husband, King Ahasuerus.

How we need to heed the admonition of Christ Himself to the Church of Philadelphia, “*Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown*” (Revelation 3:11). Thus, did Boaz become one of those who inherited the blessings because of the refusal of another to enter therein.

This, in an even greater way is true of Israel, who entered not into the promises of God, but made a way for another nation, the Church. This Church is made up of all those who are willing and obedient, and only they shall inherit the kingdom.

11

BOAZ TYPIFIES CHRIST

In the person of Boaz, there are many types hidden in this little book that concern our precious Lord Jesus. In order to fully appreciate the significance of the closing episode which depicts the marriage and the ensuing genealogy until King David, we must enumerate these types.

Firstly, Christ is seen as the Mighty Man, the wealthy landowner, who has at his disposal vast means by which He may bestow upon others the fruits of their labors. His acts of mercy flow from a generous heart; and whosoever will may come and partake of His bounty. He treats His servants with kindness and compassion as is depicted in particular by the greetings that are exchanged between Boaz and

his reapers. Being one who feared God, and one who cared for the poor, Boaz went among his reapers, spoke kindly to them, and earned their respect.

Secondly, Christ is seen as the Lord of the harvest. Throughout the Word of God, this reality is emphasized. The Song of Solomon 8:12 shows Christ, through the life of Solomon, as Baal Hamon, The Lord of the harvest. The parables of the kingdom depict Him as the sower, and then, finally, as the One who brings in the great harvest in the parable of the net.

But, perhaps, the Lord of the harvest is portrayed best in the parable of the laborers. Here, Christ is shown as the householder who is constantly seeking those who will go and work in His vineyard. It seems that there is literally no end to the number which He offers to employ, showing at once the greatness of His wealth and the abundance of the harvest, in that He gave all the same wage.

This is the same generous spirit that animated Boaz as he commanded his reapers to purposely drop extra sheaves for Ruth's benefit. He also asked Ruth to glean only in his field, and to stay close to his female workers for her protection. Truly, these actions remind us of the Lord of the Harvest, Jesus Christ.

To an extent, the kinsman redeemer is unique to the book of Ruth. Yet this ministry is certainly brought out in other contexts. For we see in the person of Jesus Christ, the One who pays the price to redeem His people from their poverty and bring them into the riches of His grace through His shed blood upon Calvary.

Boaz, as the bridegroom, typifies Christ. The bridegroom is always associated with a marriage, but how well we know that he needs a bride. Christ, too, is looking for a Bride.

We will now consider the qualities found in Ruth; for like no one else, her tender beauty exemplifies the Bride of Christ. Little did Ruth dream that she would become the beloved wife of the master of the field. And how could she have imagined the honor of her position in history as she found a place in the royal genealogy of Jesus. For of her issue came King David, King Solomon, all the kings of Judah, and then the King of kings, the Lord Jesus Christ.

12

RUTH TYPIFIES THE BRIDE OF CHRIST

Throughout scripture, Christ is called the Bridegroom. The Lord, in addressing Israel in the Old Testament, makes it clear that He is married to her. Therefore, Israel was always cognizant of that very special relationship which she enjoyed with God. Perhaps it is best summarized in Isaiah 54:5. “*For thy Maker is thine husband; the Lord of hosts is his name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; the God of the whole earth shall he be called.*”

Likewise, the Song of Songs is a book devoted to that relationship. It is a relationship with the Lord, that at one time only Israel enjoyed, but now has been granted to the Church. The Church is to have

the honor of becoming a wife to her Heavenly Husband. Yet, it is also clear from the Song of Songs that not all believers in Israel, nor in the Church, are in that corporate body termed the Bride. *“There are threescore queens, and fourscore concubines, and virgins without number. My dove, my undefiled is but one; she is the only one of her mother, she is the choice one of her that bare her. The daughters saw her, and blessed her; yea, the queens and the concubines, and they praised her”* (Song 6:8, 9).

The Bride of Christ is a corporate body made up of believers of all ages and dispensations. Those who belong to this company, who possess those characteristics which are defined in scripture, those *alone* will be a part of this great company. The Apostle John was granted the privilege to behold the Lamb's wife.

“And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife. And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, Having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal; And had a wall great and high, and

had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: On the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates. And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb” (Revelation 21:9-14).

It is important to remember that John, who was so near to Jesus during His earthly ministry, was called the beloved disciple. This closeness brought him revelation, and John tells us in the book of Revelation of another vision he received while on the Isle of Patmos. It is here that John has a revelation of the marriage supper of the Lamb. Here, too, he sees the Lamb's wife.

“Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God” (Revelation 19:7-9).

Thus, even in this passage we see a difference between those who are invited to the marriage, and the Bride herself. We have entitled this little book, “Ruth, The Gentile Bride of Christ”, and its purpose

was twofold. Firstly, we wanted to show that even in the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit was looking forward to the day when the Gentiles would be included in the promises of Israel. Secondly, by a closer examination of Ruth, we see in her those qualities that are so necessary to qualify and become a part of that very privileged group to which we refer.

So, may we now consider Ruth as that Gentile Bride, and study those virtues that enabled her to be accepted into the lineage of David, and therefore, of Christ Himself.

1. Ruth was renowned for her virtue and purity. *“Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies. The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil. She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life”* (Proverbs 31:10-12).
2. She was renowned for her devotion and faithfulness toward Naomi, and her late husband, Mahlon. *“And they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful”* (Revelation 17:14b).
3. Ruth had received much commendation for her righteous manner of life and industrious nature. *“And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints”* (Revelation 19:8).

She seeketh wool, and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands. She is like the merchants' ships; she bringeth her food from afar. She riseth also while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household, and a portion to her maidens" (Proverbs 31:13-15).

4. The Bride of Christ glorifies her Heavenly Husband through the same wisdom and kindness displayed by Ruth. *"To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God"* (Ephesians 3:10).

The scriptures give us a definition of divine wisdom. *"But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy"* (James 3:17). And when we consider the wisdom of Ruth, one can aptly think of this verse in Proverbs 31:26, *"She openeth her mouth with wisdom: and in her tongue is the law of kindness."*

Let us seek, by the grace of God, to have these noble virtues worked out in us, that we may say with Paul, "If by any means we may be counted worthy to attain" (Philippians 3:11 paraphrase).

13

THE MARRIAGE OF BOAZ AND RUTH

The way to the marriage of Ruth to Boaz is now open. Boaz has purchased all that was Elimelech's, but in so doing, he also purchased Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of Mahlon. She now will be his wife, and he will raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance.

It certainly was a very noble and generous act of this mighty man, and as we have already mentioned, many in scripture were unwilling to do so. Onan, the second son of Judah, was such a one. Genesis 38:7-9 tells us, *“And Er, Judah's firstborn, was wicked in the sight of the Lord; and the Lord slew him. And Judah said unto Onan, Go in unto thy brother's wife, and marry her, and raise up*

seed to thy brother. And Onan knew that the seed should not be his; and . . . he spilled it on the ground, lest that he should give seed to his brother.”

Boaz, in contrast, kept his promise to Ruth, and he fulfilled his obligation. All those in the gate that day who witnessed that act of benevolence toward these widows, pronounced a very significant blessing upon Ruth, perhaps little realizing how profoundly it would be fulfilled (4:11-12). This blessing included the double portion of Rachel and Leah, as well as a blessing for Boaz, that he would do worthily in Ephratah, meaning fertility. Certainly no lineage would exceed his in fruitfulness; for in it were David and his greater Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. This reminds us of another of God's promises that tells us in Revelation 5:9-10 that there shall be a seed from every kindred, and tongue, and people and nation.

These blessings epitomize the promises that God makes to His faithful followers. *“Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee: therefore will I give men or thee, and people for thy life. Fear not: for I am with thee: I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather thee from the west”* (Isaiah 43:4-5).

We also read in Isaiah 56:3, *"Neither let the son of the stranger, that hath joined himself to the Lord, speak, saying, The Lord hath utterly separated me from his people: neither let the eunuch say, Behold, I am a dry tree. For thus saith the Lord unto the eunuchs that keep my sabbaths, and choose the things that please me, and take hold of my covenant; Even unto them will I give in mine house and within my walls a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters: I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off. Also the sons of the stranger, that join themselves to the Lord, to serve him, and to love the name of the Lord, to be his servants, every one that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of my covenant; Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer: their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar; for mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people"* (Isaiah 56:3-7)

We may add these further promises, which were made to the Lord, but which are also available to us as we walk with Him and do those things that please Him. *"Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high, because he hath known my name"* (Psalm 91:14).

Also, another important verse that we can receive hope from is in Psalm 45:17. *"I will make thy name to be remembered in all generations: therefore shall the people praise thee for ever and ever."*

If that was not sufficient, they added that his house would be like the house of Pharez, which Tamar bore unto Judah. This was an indication that all the prophecies pertaining to Judah would flow from this union of Ruth and Boaz. Judah prevailed above his eleven brothers and was chosen to carry on the royal line, for out of Judah was to come the Chief Ruler, the Messiah. (See Micah 5:2; Genesis 49:8-10; I Chronicles 5:2).

The marriage of Boaz to Ruth is a type of the marriage supper of the Lamb, when the Lord of glory will be united for all time with His Bride. (Revelation 19:7). Ruth is truly a story of one who was lifted out of obscurity into a happy union with a great man of God. It is a story of her rise *from rags to riches*, and from poverty to plenty because of this man, Boaz. Yet, most of all, it is a picture of the precious Bride of Christ, and the qualities that our Heavenly Bridegroom seeks in his earthly Bride.

14

THE BLESSINGS OF NAOMI

Not forgotten in all these miracles that ensued the turning of Ruth's captivity, were those that were bestowed upon faithful Naomi. We must never underestimate her part in this beautiful story of the Gentile bride of Boaz. We think of and contemplate the beautiful devotion of Ruth to Naomi, but we must not neglect the beautiful character of Naomi that won the admiration and respect of Ruth, and in the first instance, of Orpah. Her Christ-like witness made both girls willing to leave all to follow her to the land of her nativity and to her God.

For her faithful portrayal of Christ, she was well rewarded. The women looking on after the birth of a son to the happy couple then poured praise upon Naomi. *“Blessed be the Lord that hath not left thee this day without a kinsman, [or a provider], that his name may be famous in Israel.”* This redeemer was not Boaz, but Obed, who would take away the reproach of childlessness from her and would comfort her in her old age. For it would be Obed that would be a restorer and nourisher to Naomi in her old age. (4:14, 15)

Then through the faithful witness of Naomi, who was now truly enjoying the fruits of her name—*pleasant*, she had above all this the love of her devoted daughter-in-law, Ruth, who was better to her than seven sons. Figuratively speaking it meant Ruth was better to her than a multitude of children.

Naomi then enjoyed the blessing that more mature women delight in— the privilege of nursing her grandchild. The women significantly gave the name Obed to the child, meaning *“the serving one”*, the one who would live entirely devoted to his grandmother. What grandmother could wish for anything better?

15

THE GENEALOGY OF DAVID

This book of Ruth concludes with the generations of Pharez to David, ten in number. The purpose of this additional information is one of prime importance to legalizing David's rightful position as king of Israel, and therefore to Christ's, as David's greater Son. Pharez had been born of an incestuous relationship between Judah and his daughter-in-law, but this was unknown to Judah at the time of conception.

“And in process of time the daughter of Shuah, Judah's wife died; and Judah was comforted, and went up unto his sheep shearers to Timnath to shear his sheep. And she put her widow's garments

off from her, and covered her with a vail, and wrapped herself, and sat in an open place, which is by the way to Timnath; for she saw that Shelah was grown, and she was not given unto him to wife.

When Judah saw her, he thought her to be an harlot; because she had covered her face. And he turned unto her by the way, and said, Go to, I pray thee, let me come in unto thee; (for he knew not that she was his daughter-in-law). And she said, What wilt thou give me, that thou mayest come in unto me? And he said, I will send thee a kid from the flock. And she said, Wilt thou give me a pledge, till thou send it? And he said, What pledge shall I give thee? and she said, Thy signet, and thy bracelets, and thy staff that is in thine hand. And he gave it her, and came in unto her, and she conceived by him” (Genesis 38:12-18).

Although Judah went in to his daughter-in-law in ignorance, the

fact was the same, Pharez was born of a relationship which the law of Moses forbade. Deuteronomy 23:2 tells us, “*A bastard shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord; even to his tenth generation shall he not enter into the congregation of the Lord.*”

Thus prior to David, his forefathers were ineligible to enter into the congregation of the Lord, and certainly David, if he had not been the tenth from Judah, would likewise have been disqualified from being king. Yet the law was fulfilled in that David was the tenth generation, and also in a very significant manner, was himself a man after God's own heart. How punctilious is the word of God in every way. And it behooves us to also be, that the law of God be written upon the fleshly tables of our hearts, and we can also fulfill all of His good pleasure.

16

CONCLUSION

In concluding this little book, it is important to remember that one of the central truths is marriage. It is about two girls, widowed, who of necessity need to remarry to provide rest and security for themselves in the households of new husbands.

One, Orpah, returned back to her own land and gods, away from the promises of the true God. The other, Ruth, followed hard after God and through many trials, testings and tribulations was rewarded by the Lord with a husband par excellence in Boaz. It is worthy also to note the qualities that make for lasting and rewarding marriages in God. These qualities are revealed through the character of Ruth,

and as we have already stated, are the same qualities that Christ is looking for in His bride. We, therefore, will do well to seek them for our own. We should seek for the following:

1. A faithful and loving relationship with a father or mother in Israel who can be a guide and counselor to the younger.
2. A complete abandonment to the will of God.
3. A holy determination to keep the law and commandments of God at all times and in all circumstances.
4. An industrious nature. This is manifested also in the attitude of Rebecca who was chosen to be the bride of Isaac, in that she was willing to water the ten camels of Abraham's servant, Eliezer.
5. A good testimony before God and man as Ruth had.

These qualities will help us to qualify for a place in the Bride of Christ. For we must never forget that all things upon earth are only types and shadows of the eternal, spiritual, and heavenly realities.

Remember well the great lesson of love that is exemplified in Ruth's devotion to Naomi. Let the scriptures so challenge us which say, *"How can we say that we love God if we do not love our brother?"* (1 John 4:20 paraphrase).

"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13). Ruth sacrificed her own life because of her love for Naomi and her late husband. She certainly did not as Paul says of some of the women of his day, Cast off their first love and faith. (See 1 Timothy 5:12; Revelation 2:4).

The love that Ruth manifested received a full reward from the Lord of glory. May that same love burn as a bright flame within us, flowing out toward our marriage partners, family members and our neighbors. If this divine love is allowed to be developed in our lives, when we see His lovely face and behold those beautiful eyes on that day, we will hear from those precious lips, *"Well done, thou good and faithful servant . . . enter into the joy of the Lord"* (Mathew 25:21). Amen! May it so be, dear Lord.